



State of Rhode Island
DEPARTMENT OF ELEMENTARY AND SECONDARY EDUCATION
Shepard Building
255 Westminister Street
Providence, Rhode Island 02903-3400

Enclosure 5c
February 8, 2022

Angélica Infante-Green
Commissioner

February 8, 2022

TO: Members of the Council on Elementary and Secondary Education

FROM: Angélica Infante-Green, Commissioner *A. Infante*

RE: Recommendation of Members for the Rhode Island Vision Education Services Program (RIVESP) Advisory Board

The Advisory Board for the Rhode Island Vision Education Services Program (RIVESP) serves to advise the Commissioner of Education in accordance with Rhode Island General Law §16-26.1 on the education of children in our state who are blind or visually impaired. The Advisory Board is composed of eleven members, of which not less than six will be persons or the parents of persons who are blind or visually impaired. The RIGL 16-26.1-2. Under, Advisory Board, requires the following:

(a) The powers delegated and authorized in this chapter for the board of regents for elementary and secondary education and the department of elementary and secondary education shall be in addition to those previously authorized by any other general or public law.

(b) The governance, funding, and programming of the Rhode Island Vision Education and Services Program (hereinafter referred to as RIVESP) shall be in accordance with the rules and regulations formulated by the board of regents for elementary and secondary education pursuant to chapter 35 of title 42.

(c) The board of regents for elementary and secondary education shall appoint the members of the advisory board from nominations made by the commissioner of elementary and secondary education. The chairperson shall also be selected in this manner. The board of regents for elementary and secondary education shall determine the qualifications and terms of office of members of the board of trustees. The advisory board shall be comprised of eleven (11) individuals, not less than six (6) of whom shall be persons or parents of persons who are blind and visually impaired. The commissioner may seek input on nominations of persons or parents, guardians of persons who are blind and visually impaired from organizations whose membership is primarily made up of parents of blind and visually impaired individuals, individuals who are blind and visually impaired, or organizations whose purpose is advocacy for individuals who are blind and visually impaired, as well as from other sources. For purposes of obtaining input from diverse sources regarding suggestions for nominations for the first advisory board to be nominated by the commissioner, the commissioner shall convene a

public forum to obtain broad input prior to making the initial nominations for the founding membership on the advisory board. No person in any way employed by or doing business for monetary gain with the RIVESP shall be eligible for appointment to the board. The departments of education, health, human services, and the RIVESP shall serve ex-officio and be nonvoting members.

(d) The board of regents shall establish strategic directions for the education of blind and visually impaired children in the state of Rhode Island.

(e) The board of regents shall provide parameters for budget requests, recommend a budget, and participate in budget development.

(f) The commissioner of elementary and secondary education shall recommend parameters for the overall budget requests, recommend a budget, and participate in budget development.

(g) The advisory board shall meet not less than quarterly and serve without compensation. Five (5) members of the advisory board shall be required for quorums. They shall keep records of their meetings and report annually on the educational progress of the Rhode Island vision and educational services program to the commissioner, board of regents and the general assembly, and state library.

(h) The advisory board shall recommend to the RIVESP: (1) The needs of the blind and visually impaired children in the state of Rhode Island; (2) The educational and service policies required to meet the needs of blind and visually impaired children served by the RIVESP; (3) Policy guidance and suggestions for budget development; (4) Methods which ensure that all students are taught by educators of the highest possible quality; (5) Appropriate committees and/or workgroups as needed, to provide guidance and feedback on the goals and outcomes of the RIVESP; (6) Make themselves available to the board of regents, departments of education, health, human services and to the RIVESP in order to provide a link between these agencies. The advisory board shall utilize as a guiding document to advise policy, and annually update, the "Special House Commission to Promote and Develop a Comprehensive System of Education for Visually Impaired Children, The Final Report, November 2005"; and (7) The educational policies to meet the needs of the blind and visually impaired children and to advise on implementation of policies established by the board of regents, and the RIVESP.

The Council approved eight members of the RIVESP Advisory Board on September 14, 2021. This left three vacancies on the current Advisory Board. As such, the Commissioner is recommending the following individuals for the three vacancies on the RIVESP Advisory Board.

- **Jamie Partridge**
- **Danielle Petsch**
- **Sarah Shaffer**

RECOMMENDATION: THAT the Council on Elementary and Secondary Education approves the appointment of the three recommended members for the Advisory Board for the Rhode Island Vision Education Services Program (RIVESP), as presented.

Candidates for the Rhode Island

Vision Education Services Program (RIVESP) Advisory Board

Name: Jamie Partridge

1. Background:

What led you to be interested in serving on the Advisory Board?

As a parent of children living with vision loss and as an adult living with vision loss, I have the personal experience enabling me to provide a unique perspective to the advisory board, of which I believe will be an asset to the goals of the board. Both of my children are students in the Rhode Island school systems and have been receiving supportive services to support their learning needs as children living with vision loss. As such, I want to be a voice for my children and for the children living in RI to ensure their needs are met to the best of the state's abilities and to ensure we are providing the highest quality services to all children living in the state.

2. Qualifications:

What qualities and strengths from your background and experience will you bring to the Advisory Board if you are chosen to serve?

As I mentioned previously, I am a parent of children living with vision loss, both of whom are in the school systems presently. I am also an adult living with vision loss, through which my life experiences influenced me to become a Clinical Social Worker with a master's degree, focusing on Health and Mental Health. I have worked primarily with individuals living with disabilities, advocating with them for access to services, providing therapy, and case management.

Since 2016, I have been a plan writer for adults living with disabilities for OPTIONS and the Fogarty Center. In addition to my work for OPTIONS, I also provide therapy as a licensed clinical social worker. My prior professional experience includes, but is not limited to working for the Boston Center for Independent Living, Visiting Nurses Home and Hospice as a social worker, and Community Work Services as their lead Case manager for adults living with disabilities.

Presently, I am a member of the Governor's Advisory Council for the Blind in Rhode Island, focusing on advising SBVI regarding its programs provided by the agency, oversight for the ILP for elderly living with vision loss and/or blindness, and collaborating with the State Rehabilitation Council and the Statewide Independent Living Council.

Lastly, I am also board member for the Statewide Independent Living Council. The SILC partners with the OSCIL to develop Rhode Island's State Plan for Independent Living,

which directly addresses issues important to the development and progression of Independent Living.

As demonstrated through my professional background, I have many years of experience working with youth, young adults, and adults living with disabilities, many of whom have been individuals living with vision loss. I am passionate about my work as a social worker and as a board member, and I would like to use my skills and experience to support the long-term goals of the RIVESP advisory board.

3. Goals:

Is there any particular area or initiative that you would like to focus on as a new member of the Advisory Board?

Long-term, I would like to focus on accessibility in the state of Rhode Island for children living with vision loss in the schools, on the playgrounds, and in public spaces. Having visited many playgrounds throughout the state, I believe this is an area in need of growth in our state; many of the playgrounds do not have clearly marked stairs, contrasting structures, or even wheelchair accessible spaces for children living with physical disabilities. I believe this is an area in which we have an opportunity to partner with schools and other agencies to provide them with the support and information necessary to make all playgrounds more accessible for kids living with vision loss.

Candidates are welcomed to attach a resume, but it is not required.

Candidates for the Rhode Island

Vision Education Services Program (RIVESP) Advisory Board

Name: Danielle Petsch M.Ed.

1. Background:

What led you to be interested in serving on the Advisory Board?

I have been teaching blind and/or visually impaired students in RI since 2009. I also help run a twice a year overnight camp for blind and/or visually impaired students in RI for the past 12 years. I am interested in aligning the standards and policies for the needs and educational requirements for this group of students and their providers.

2. Qualifications:

What qualities and strengths from your background and experience will you bring to the Advisory Board if you are chosen to serve?

I have been working with this population of students for 12 years now in an educational and social capacity. I have helped to create some of the curriculums and testing materials used for the Providence students. I am also involved in all the ordering of texts and materials in braille, large print and digital formats for our students.

On top of teaching, I have helped to run the twice annual Camp Mauchatea for our students who are blind or visually impaired. This overnight camp is to expose our students to social, recreation & leisure, and daily living skills through fun community activities.

For the previous four summers I served as TVI for the BELL Braille Literacy camp for NFB of RI.

I also have a special education teaching degree and taught 4 & 5th grade inclusion for 8 years in Mansfield, MA and North Smithfield, RI.

3. Goals:

Is there any particular area or initiative that you would like to focus on as a new member of the Advisory Board?

I think just making sure all our RI students have access to the materials they need as well as high quality trained teachers.

Candidates for the Rhode Island

Vision Education Services Program (RIVESP) Advisory Board

Name: Sarah Shaffer

9 Norton Drive, Cumberland, RI 02864

(401) 919-6202

sarahshaffer4@gmail.com

1. Background:

What led you to be interested in serving on the Advisory Board?

My journey, as it pertains to vision loss, began when my son was born 3 ½ years ago with microphthalmia and retinal folds. In seeking to learn and understand how best to support him, I learned of the RIVESP Advisory Board from our TVI. When the services for my son were in jeopardy, after the layoffs of TVIs and O&Ms last March, I did whatever I could through research, making connections with families, and contacting lawmakers to educate myself and seek to keep this wonderful program operating to support the children who need these services the most. Once I was able to attend several meetings of the advisory board, I could feel the passion of its stakeholders, who are truly invested in the education and support of children who are blind and visually impaired. When the opportunity came up to serve on the advisory board, I knew that I wanted to be a part of a group that is focused on the continued success of my son and countless others.

2. Qualifications:

What qualities and strengths from your background and experience will you bring to the Advisory Board if you are chosen to serve?

While I am not vision impaired and am very new to the world of vision loss, I am eager to learn. I am not afraid to ask questions, research to gain understanding, and bring my perspective to the table. As a parent, I have experience interacting with a wide array of medical professionals and navigating various processes related to obtaining support for my son's needs, including early intervention, transition to public preschool, collaborating with daycare providers, and PASS services. As a public school educator, I have understanding of current educational policies, the IEP process, and avenues to seek to advocate for students. I understand the expectations placed on children in public schools and can provide insight into ways to communicate with administrators and other educators as it pertains to children with vision impairments. Overall, I am not afraid to advocate for the needs of children and will work tirelessly to support the success of RIVESP.

3. Goals:

Is there any particular area or initiative that you would like to focus on as a new member of the Advisory Board?

If chosen to serve on the Advisory Board, I would be willing to follow the need and work on any initiative, as I believe that any area or initiative is worth the time and energy. I am extremely interested in exploring the Final Report and current policies related to the education of blind and visually impaired children. I am also passionate about equity and accessibility in the community for blind and visually impaired children. Since I have fresh experience with early intervention, transition to public preschool, and the initial IEP process, I am always willing to follow any initiatives related to those areas.